

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-03 PA-01
ICA-11 SP-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /049 W
-----072635 040231Z /15

R 031002Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9052

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

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ROME FOR RCAA DWOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, AEMR, LE

SUBJECT: AIRPORT STATUS; MEA PROFITABILITY IN 1978

1. FOLLOWING IS BEIRUT AIRPORT STATUS UPDATE AND NEW INFO ON
MEA OPERATIONS FOR JAN-JULY 1978.

2. BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IS OPERATING NORMALLY AUG 3.
DESPITE FACT MANY FLIGHT ARE FULLY BOOKED AND HAVE WAIT-LISTS,
NO-SHOWS CONTINUE TO PLAGUE THE CARRIERS. EXAMPLES FROM AUG 1
MEA DEPARTURES (AIRCRAFT CAPACITY IS 149 SEATS, NUMBER
DESIGNATES ACTUAL PASSENGERS): TO LARNACA 113, LONDON 110,
MADRID 109, AMMAN 108, KUWAIT 105, PARIS 100, ROME 76. MEA
LOAD FACTOR DEPARTING BEIRUT AVERAGED 54 PERCENT IN JULY, HAS
RISEN TO 57-58 PERCENT SINCE EMBASSY ADVISORY ANNOUNCEMENT
JULY 27, LEAVING APPROX 40 PERCENT OF AVAILABLE CAPACITY
UNUSED. MEA'S DEPARTURE SINCE EMBASSY'S ANNOUNCEMENT ARE
RUNNING ONLY 3 PERCENT ABOVE LEVELS FOR SAME WEEK LAST YEAR:
MEA IS CARRYING AN AVERAGE OF 1570 PASSENGERS PER DAY
VS 1977 AVERAGE OF 1520. WHILE AIR FRANCE AND OTHER
CARRIERS MAY HAVE HIGHER LOAD FACTORS THAN MEA, OVERALL
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SITUATION REMAINS ONE OF EXCESS CAPACITY, NOT EXCESS
DEMAND. RESERVATIONS VOLUME NOTWITHSTANDING, ACTUAL
DEPARTURE CONTRADICT NOTION OF PANIC.

3. IN RELATING INFORMATION ABOVE, MEA PRESIDENT ASAD
NASR GAVE FOLLOWING SUMMARY OF MEA'S 1978 ACTIVITY AND

PROJECTIONS. IN JANUARY, MEA FORECAST 1978 PROFITS OF LL 21 MILLION. DESPITE FAYYADIYAH CLASH IN FEBRUARY, PROJECTION WAS RAISED TO LL 27 MILLION IN EARLY MARCH. BEGINNING IN APRIL, NEW GOL VISA POLICY DENYING VISAS ON ARRIVAL AND UK-ISSUED TRAVEL ADVISORY AFFECTING LONGON -BEIRUT PASSENGERS SHARPLY REDUCED INBOUND TRAFFIC. BY JUNE, ALTHOUGH DEPARTURES FROM BEIRUT APPROXIMATED 1977 LEVELS, ARRIVALS WERE 30-40 PERCENT LOWER, FORCING MEA TO REDUCE PROFIT PROJECTION YEAR TO LL 13 MILLION. JULY ARRIVALS FELL FURTHER 20 PERCENT BELOW JUNE LEVELS. ASAD NASR GAVE MEA'S LATEST PROFIT PROJECTION AT LL 7 MILLION.

4. COMMENT: ABOVE DATA SUPPORT EARLIER REPORTING THAT MEA'S FLEET EXPANSION PROGRAM HAS GONE BY THE BOARD. INDEED, TREND INDICATES MEA MAY HAVE REASON BEFORE YEAR END TO REDUCE PRESENT CAPACITY THROUGH LEASE ARRANGEMENTS.

DECON 12/31/81.
PARKER

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